

GLOWACKI v. HOWELL PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT, ET AL

WENDY S. HILLER

September 12, 2012

Prepared for you by

 **BIENENSTOCK**
NATIONWIDE COURT REPORTING & VIDEO

Bingham Farms/Southfield • Grand Rapids
Ann Arbor • Detroit • Flint • Jackson • Lansing • Mt. Clemens • Saginaw



WENDY S. HILLER
September 12, 2012

Page 9

1 T-shirt with white writing on it, and it said
2 "Tyler's Army" on the front and it said "Fighting
3 Evil With Kindness" on the back. And I wore it to
4 school the next day to talk about how making kids
5 feel safe was really important. And several of my
6 colleagues and some students asked if I would make
7 one for them, and I said I'd find out how much it
8 would cost and all because I had just made the
9 one.

10 And then when the Anti-Bullying Day
11 came out, I thought instead of making them in
12 black and white, I'd make -- I'd make the ones
13 that I was ordering in purple, and so it seemed to
14 fit with the idea of anti-bullying.

15 So I think I made 20, and I gave some
16 of them to my daughters and their friends in Ann
17 Arbor, and then I brought the rest up to Howell.
18 And after school, I think it was the night before,
19 and then before school, the day of the purple
20 t-shirt day, I gave them to people who had asked
21 for them and some people who hadn't asked for them
22 but I just thought that I knew that they were
23 against bullying and so I thought that it would be
24 something they would be interested in.

25 Q. So you said three weeks prior?

WENDY S. HILLER
September 12, 2012

Page 10

1 A. I think it was about three weeks. I'd have to
2 look at the date that Tyler Clementi committed
3 suicide, but I think it was about two or three
4 weeks before that, and then after that, the press
5 about all the kids who had committed suicide
6 recently in that time period sort of came up, but
7 it was Tyler's death that really struck a chord
8 with me, because he was so new as a freshman in
9 college, and when his roommates and friends
10 bullied him, he killed himself. And he was from
11 my old hometown, and so -- though I didn't know
12 him. I was a little kid in that town, but it just
13 hit me hard.

14 Q. And you're saying two to three weeks prior to the
15 20th of October?

16 A. Right. It was in September, I'm pretty sure.

17 Q. And what are the facts and circumstances
18 surrounding Tyler Clementi committing suicide?

19 A. There was a court case on it recently. He was a
20 freshman. He had just gone off to Rutgers, and
21 his roommate -- as far as I understand it, his
22 roommate and some other friends of the roommate
23 set up a web cam in his room without his knowledge
24 to -- and told their friends to watch him having a
25 homosexual encounter. I don't even think it was

WENDY S. HILLER
September 12, 2012

Page 11

1 sex. It was sort a first date sort of thing. And
2 when he found that out, he jumped off the George
3 Washington Bridge and killed himself.

4 Q. When he found out that there was a web cam set up
5 in his room?

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. And do you know if the web cam captured --

8 A. It didn't.

9 Q. -- footage of him?

10 A. It didn't. It was turned off before. But he knew
11 that everybody was waiting and watching to see
12 that.

13 Q. And you said that Tyler Clementi was from your
14 hometown?

15 A. He was from Ridgewood, New Jersey, which is where
16 I lived when I was a little kid, and then he went
17 to Rutgers.

18 Q. And how did you hear about this story?

19 A. I heard it on the radio.

20 Q. And you said that evening after hearing about
21 this --

22 A. I called my daughter at school, and I was pretty
23 broken up about it, and then I thought I just have
24 to do something to stand up against the idea of
25 kids being mean to each other, because at the high

WENDY S. HILLER
September 12, 2012

Page 12

1 school, we deal with hurt feelings of kids all the
2 time, and so I thought I have to do something, and
3 I felt very helpless, and so I called a T-shirt
4 place in town, in Ann Arbor, where I live, and I
5 said can you make a T-shirt while I wait, and I
6 thought about what I wanted it to say, and I
7 wanted to -- I wanted to mention Tyler but I
8 really wanted it to be an anti-bullying statement,
9 and so that's why it said "Fighting Evil With
10 Kindness."

11 Q. Did you believe that Tyler Clementi had been
12 targeted because he was homosexual?

13 A. I don't know. At the time I was really thinking
14 of it as a kind of bullying that kids do to each
15 other, because I know that he was kind of a nerdy
16 kid, and I think sometimes people just make fun of
17 kids for all different reasons. I think the fact
18 that he was gay may have had to do with it, but I
19 certainly don't know if it was a hate crime. I
20 just know that it was a really cruel thing to do.

21 Q. And what was the name of the T-shirt place that
22 you went to in Ann Arbor?

23 A. Elmo's.

24 Q. Could you spell that.

25 A. E-l-m-o apostrophe s.

WENDY S. HILLER
September 12, 2012

Page 13

1 Q. And when you wore the T-shirt the next day to
2 school, what was the reaction you received?

3 A. Well, most people didn't say anything. They
4 didn't know what it was at all. Some people said,
5 who's Tyler or what's Tyler's Army, and so, you
6 know, I told them what had happened, and one of
7 the reasons I called it Tyler's Army was, you
8 know -- you had asked about whether I think he had
9 been targeted for his homosexuality. I think that
10 was a piece of it but not the most important
11 thing, and I called it Tyler's Army. The idea of
12 Tyler's Army came from, in a kids' book, Harry
13 Potter, where they fight against evil, and they
14 called it Dumbledore's Army, and Dumbledore's Army
15 fights against evil, and after the Harry Potter
16 books were all over, the author, J.K. Rowling, was
17 asked about Dumbledore, and she said that in her
18 mind, Dumbledore was homosexual, but that she
19 never mentioned it in the books because it really
20 wasn't important. It wasn't what he was about.
21 It had nothing to do with the story. And so
22 that's really why I chose to call this Tyler's
23 Army, because, yes, he's homosexual, but that's
24 not what this was really about. This was really
25 about bullying, and to stand up against bullying,

WENDY S. HILLER
September 12, 2012

Page 14

1 whether you're straight or gay or whatever, is
2 really what I was aiming for.

3 Q. So how many people would you say asked about the
4 T-shirt that you were wearing?

5 A. Gosh, I couldn't say. Maybe 10, but that's a
6 guess.

7 Q. Were any of the people on the administration of
8 the school?

9 A. No. They were -- it was teachers and students.

10 Q. Did you have any concern that bringing up the
11 issue or wearing the T-shirt would cause
12 questions for the students to pose to you?

13 A. I don't know what you mean.

14 Q. Did you think that wearing the T-shirt -- the
15 Tyler's Army T-shirt might start questioning from
16 students as to why you were wearing the T-shirt?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. And what were your thoughts on that?

19 A. Well, I thought the message of anti-bullying was
20 important, and so I didn't really see that as a
21 controversial issue. I don't know anybody who
22 thinks people should be bullied into committing
23 suicide.

24 Q. And did you believe that you should ask anyone in
25 administration prior to bringing up such a topic?

WENDY S. HILLER
September 12, 2012

Page 15

1 A. I didn't, because I didn't think it was a
2 controversial issue. I thought anti-bullying
3 is -- I mean, it's a little like being for, you
4 know, puppies and rainbows. I didn't see it as
5 controversial.

6 Q. Now, after you wore the black T-shirt to school,
7 when did you start receiving responses about
8 creating a T-shirt for Anti-Bullying Day?

9 A. It was never -- it was never asking about creating
10 a T-shirt for Anti-Bullying Day.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. That's never what it was.

13 Q. Can you correct me.

14 A. Yes. I created the T-shirt on my own. Some
15 people asked if I would have one printed for them.
16 I was trying to find out prices of what it would
17 cost depending on how many I ordered and what
18 color I should make it and whether it should have
19 V-neck, and that's when I heard about the
20 Anti-Bullying Day and I thought, I'll make them in
21 purple. It was never creating a T-shirt for
22 Anti-Bullying Day.

23 Q. Okay. So I guess when was it that you found out
24 about Anti-Bullying Day, period?

25 A. I don't remember. I think I heard about it first

WENDY S. HILLER
September 12, 2012

Page 16

1 on the radio or on Facebook. I'm not sure which.

2 Q. What was your understanding of what Anti-Bullying
3 Day was?

4 A. It was against bullying. It was -- particularly
5 because there had been this sort of rash of
6 suicides or at least the publication about them,
7 it was time to stand up and say let's make --
8 let's be nice, let's stand up against bullying of
9 all kinds. And though it was presented from the
10 gay community, I never saw it as a gay issue. I
11 always saw it as a Anti-Bullying Day. So, again,
12 I didn't see it as controversial because I don't
13 know anyone who's for bullying.

14 Q. When you say "rash of suicides," what are you
15 talking about?

16 A. There were several suicides across the country --
17 I don't know the number -- between September and
18 October of that year. There were, I think -- I
19 think maybe four or five that were publicized,
20 kids who had been targeted, most of them because
21 they were gay, some of them because they were
22 perceived as gay or just different, and some of
23 them as young as, I think, 12 years old. And they
24 committed suicide and so there had been a lot of
25 press about that. We had been really taking a